

AWFUL GAS EXPLOSION!

Twelve People Had Miraculous Escape From Instant Death---Seven Were Seriously Injured and Immediately Taken to Hospital.

RUBBER HOSE CAUSED THE EXPLOSION

No Lives Were Lost---The Wonder Is How Anyone Escaped Death---Jessie Dent Was Blown Out Through the Window and Landed On a Fence She Barely Escaped the Falling Walls Of the House.

The worst catastrophe that ever took place in Fairmont, occurred this morning at two o'clock, when one of the houses on Virginia avenue, belonging to Watson, Miller and Malone, was blown up by an explosion of gas. As a result seven people were taken to Cook's Hospital. They are:

ERNEST WRAASE.
MRS. ERNEST WRAASE.
EDWARD WRAASE.
CHARLES WRAASE.
DESSIE THOMAS.
MRS. WILLIAM DENT.
MILLIE DENT.

About two o'clock this morning the people of Fairmont were aroused by an explosion, followed by the fire alarm. A large number hurriedly dressed and rushed to the scene of the disaster. It proved to be a house on Virginia avenue, in the Fourth ward.

When the first people arrived upon the scene they found the house in splinters and the ones who had lived in it were running around in their night clothes.

The great mystery is how the members of the two families were not killed. The house was occupied by William M. Dent and family, and by Ernest Wraase and family. Dent's family consists of seven members, while there were four of Wraase's, besides a hired girl. Of the twelve inmates of the house all were scared more or less.

CAUSE OF THE EXPLOSION.

The cause of the explosion was gas. A rubber hose was stretched from one room to a hot plate into another room. Instead of turning off the gas where the hose joined the pipe, it was turned off at the hot plate. In the night after the factories stopped the use of the gas, the pressure became so great that the hose was blown from the pipe, thus allowing the gas to escape into the room.

The gas escaped into the room in which Mr. and Mrs. Wraase and their two children slept. A lamp was kept burning in order to care for the baby. About two o'clock Mrs. Wraase awoke and smelled the gas. She told her husband, and he said to her: "For God's sake get out as soon as possible." She took one of the children and started, and he grabbed the other, but before he was fairly out of bed, the explosion took place.

Mr. Dent was sleeping in a Morris chair, and his wife and child, Marmaduke, were in a bed in the same room. His daughters, Frankie, Jessie and Millie, were in another room. His step-son, Boardman Weaver, was in a room down stairs, while Miss Thomas, Wraase's hired girl, was in the room over Weaver.

After the explosion Mr. and Mrs. Wraase found themselves and the children under a lot of debris. Mr. and Mrs.

Dent and Marmaduke were totally hidden from the outside world. Miss Thomas found herself down in the room with Weaver. Jessie and Frankie Dent were blown out of the window, while Millie was fastened under her bed and was not found for some time.

The older members of both families worked hard to free themselves and their families from the debris. Wraase lost his cork leg, but hopped around and did what he could.

The building took fire immediately, and the department was called out. In a very short time they made the run of a mile, and in a very few minutes after arriving, the blaze was put out. In fact, the work of the department was so well done that the fire did not get much of a start.

William Dent was jarred up, and his hand and leg hurt, but his injuries are not serious.

Mrs. Dent was taken to Cook's Hospital.

Jessie Dent, 15, and Frankie Dent, 13, were only slightly scratched.

Millie Dent, 12, was found almost smothered under her bed, and was taken to the hospital.

Boardman Weaver is sore, but hardly scratched.

Marmaduke Dent, the little boy who was with Mr. and Mrs. Dent, was not scratched.

All of Wraase's family and the hired girl were taken to the hospital.

THE WRECKED HOUSE.

From the way the house is wrecked it looks like there must have been a large amount of gas in the house. The roof on one side of the house was lifted and turned around. Windows in the neighbor's houses were broken, and a man and a child on Gaston avenue were thrown from their bed. But again, if there had been much gas in the house the inmates would have been asphyxiated.

Dent is a carpenter, but has just recovered from a sick spell. He had the house rented and Wraase rented two rooms from him. The latter is a tailor, and works for Wilbur Hennen. Both families lost all their furniture and clothing. Dent had a fine library but it was burned. Mrs. Wraase is just recovering from fever. None of the furniture was insured, and is a total loss.

Both families are left in rather bad financial circumstances, as sickness took most of their money.

Anyone who went to look at the wreck of the house and saw where the people were sleeping can out marvel at their escape. Beams, flues, partitions and all kinds of debris fell over and around them. Several of the escaped death from falling timbers only by a few inches.

For some time it was thought that Millie Dent had been killed. Mr. Dent worked with the power of several men until, when the bed was lifted up, she jumped up and said she was nearly smothered. When Mr. Dent saw her alive he was over-

come with joy and almost completely gave way.

AT COOK'S HOSPITAL.

A West Virginian man saw the victims of the explosion at Cook's Hospital early this morning. In a private ward are three of them, the most serious.

In the center lies Mrs. Wraase, the wife and mother. She is swathed in bandages from head to foot. Only the nose and ears are visible. She groans continually, and seems to be suffering intense agony. She displayed great nerve and fortitude during her experience and removal to the hospital.

Mrs. Wraase is a mass of burns from head to foot. The physicians state that with the exception of the center of the back and a small portion of the chest, she is literally a series of blisters. She recovered from a severe attack of typhoid fever only two weeks since, which makes her injuries more serious.

On the cot at her right, lies her three-year-old son, the oldest child. He is suffering from a bad cut in the head, and an ugly gash in the right leg, near the hip. He was resting on his right side, apparently sound asleep, although with wide open eyes.

JESSIE DENT'S EXPERIENCE.

Miss Jessie, the pretty fifteen-year-old daughter of Mrs. Dent, said: "I was sleeping in the back room of the house with my two sisters, Frankie and Millie. I heard the wood cracking around me and awoke. Just then the explosion occurred. I sailed through a window and lit on the fence which separates the house from the one next to it. The fence is a wire one with a small board on the top. I lit on this fairly, and being somewhat dazed, held on. When I collected by senses I jumped down and ran a few feet. And I was just in time, for the side wall fell right where I was sitting. One of my sisters, Frankie, was blown out the back window, and escaped with slight injuries. I sustained cuts on my arm, ear and foot, but they do not bother me."

At the left of Mrs. Wraase is the domestic, Dessie Thomas. She was not able to make a statement, yet she is not seriously hurt. The burns on her hands and face constitute her wounds. In the general ward, a pathetic sight greets the eye. Ernest Wraase, the husband, and father of the two children lies with the sleeping form of his 13-months-old boy on his breast.

The mother, who resembles an Egyptian mummy in her bandages and motionless state, endures untold agony. Not knowing the extent of her own injuries, and nearly crazed with grief for the others who are dearer than life to her.

This morning a large number of people visited the wreck and all agree that it is a miracle how the people escaped.